

SUBPART H—Reserved.

COVID-19 ORIGIN ACT OF 2023

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 619, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 619) to require the Director of National Intelligence to declassify information relating to the origin of COVID-19, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 619) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 619

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “COVID-19 Origin Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) identifying the origin of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is critical for preventing a similar pandemic from occurring in the future;

(2) there is reason to believe the COVID-19 pandemic may have originated at the Wuhan Institute of Virology; and

(3) the Director of National Intelligence should declassify and make available to the public as much information as possible about the origin of COVID-19 so the United States and like-minded countries can—

(A) identify the origin of COVID-19 as expeditiously as possible, and

(B) use that information to take all appropriate measures to prevent a similar pandemic from occurring again.

SEC. 3. DECLASSIFICATION OF INFORMATION RELATED TO THE ORIGIN OF COVID-19.

Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of National Intelligence shall—

(1) declassify any and all information relating to potential links between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the origin of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), including—

(A) activities performed by the Wuhan Institute of Virology with or on behalf of the People's Liberation Army;

(B) coronavirus research or other related activities performed at the Wuhan Institute of Virology prior to the outbreak of COVID-19; and

(C) researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology who fell ill in autumn 2019, including for any such researcher—

(i) the researcher's name;

(ii) the researcher's symptoms;

(iii) the date of the onset of the researcher's symptoms;

(iv) the researcher's role at the Wuhan Institute of Virology;

(v) whether the researcher was involved with or exposed to coronavirus research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology;

(vi) whether the researcher visited a hospital while they were ill; and

(vii) a description of any other actions taken by the researcher that may suggest they were experiencing a serious illness at the time; and

(2) submit to Congress an unclassified report that contains—

(A) all of the information described under paragraph (1); and

(B) only such redactions as the Director determines necessary to protect sources and methods.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY,
MARCH 2, 2023

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Thursday, March 2; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Lawless nomination postcloture; further that at 11:30 a.m., the Senate vote on confirmation of the Lawless nomination and the motion to invoke cloture on the Gallagher nomination; that if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time be considered expired and the confirmation votes on the Simmons and Gallagher nominations be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader; further that the Senate recess following the cloture vote on the Gallagher nomination until 1:45 p.m.; and that at 1:45 p.m., the Senate vote on confirmation of the Grey nomination; finally, if any nominations are confirmed during Thursday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senators LANKFORD and CRUZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from Oklahoma.

HISTORIC BIG 10 BALLROOM

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I have to tell you, this past weekend, I stood with the Williams' family and Shaw family, with hundreds of other folks, and I listened to live music in the Historic Big 10 Ballroom.

Now, that may not mean a lot to a lot of folks in this room, but it is a

really big deal in my State, in Oklahoma, to hear live music in the Big 10 Ballroom.

Let me set the scene for you: Lonnie Williams was one of the first African-American police officers in Tulsa, OK. Now, I have spoken many times to this body about Greenwood and about the race massacre that happened May 31 and June 1 of 1921.

We have talked at length about what happened during that time for what is, in all likelihood, the worst race massacre in American history. It was in 1921. So for Lonnie Williams to be one of the first Black police officers in Tulsa was really a big deal.

He served in the police department, and he opened up several other businesses as his side hustle, and then, eventually, opened up what he called the Big 10 Ballroom in 1948.

It was a venue for Black artists to be able to come in because in 1948, a lot of Black artists couldn't play in a lot of auditoriums in America, including in my State. So they would invite these great musicians to be able to come through, that they would tour, and there was this kind of behind-the-scenes group of venues that was scattered through the country where Black artists could perform, and the one that we had in Oklahoma was the Big 10.

Now, it was no simple thing for them to be able to travel because at the time when those Black artists were traveling, they couldn't be in a lot of hotels; they couldn't eat in a lot of restaurants. But when they came to Greenwood, there were still families who would welcome them in.

The Williams' family, who owned the Big 10, their family, in fact, would host folks. They still tell stories about getting up in the morning and stepping over the Temptations sleeping in their living room. And when I talk about artists playing in the Big 10, I am not talking about just any artists in American history; I am talking about Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Ike and Tina Turner, Ray Charles, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, B.B. King, Fats Domino, Little Richard, and I have already mentioned the Temptations.

Interestingly enough, the last place that Otis Redding played before he died in a plane crash was the Big 10 Ballroom in Tulsa, OK.

Now you know why we call it the Historic Big 10 Ballroom. That Ballroom was the place to be able to get music in North Tulsa for decades, and then it closed down in the 1960s. A lot of urban renewal was happening in that area, and a lot of things were shifting. The building was used for a while as a beauty supply warehouse, quite frankly. The roof caved in eventually as they abandoned it, and it sat idle for more than two decades. Quite frankly, an eyesore in the neighborhood, but to the Williams family and to lots of other folks in North Tulsa, when they drove up and down Apache, they would still see the glory of the Big 10 and what she could be in the days ahead.

But no one took the risk because all that was going to get the Big 10 back alive was hope and a whole bunch of money, until Dr. Lester Shaw stood in the parking lot of the Big 10 and saw it not for what it was—quite frankly, a place where more pigeons lived than anything else—but for what she could be again.

In 2007, Dr. Shaw bought that building. Quite frankly, his wife was pretty nervous about it, thinking what in the world. But Brenda Shaw knows her husband Lester well, and when he got an idea, she knew it must be from God and it was going to turn out OK because he was going to be tenacious enough to get it done.

You see, Dr. Shaw and Brenda Shaw—by the way, both doctors now, so it is Dr. and Dr. Shaw—the two of them have for the last 23 years committed every second of their spare time to thousands of kids in Greenwood. They run a ministry after school called A Pocket Full of Hope, and a Pocket Full of Hope teaches arts, music, photography, videography.

They invest in the lives of students in that area, and for the last 23 years as they have mentored kids after school—brace yourself—they have helped 100 percent of those kids graduate from high school, not a single one of them hasn't finished high school.

They traveled all over the country, including right here to Washington, DC, to be able to perform music, but they never really had a place to perform. They really never had a place that was their own. In this location, where they have about 350 people a year who come through to be able to be mentored by Pocket players—those who have gone through Pocket Full of Hope in the past and those who are helping—and for Lester Shaw and his leadership, those folks have made a remarkable difference in the community.

Dr. Shaw, in 2007, saw the Big 10 for what she could be again and, last weekend, what she is again.

There is live music again at the Big 10. I was listening to it last weekend as it came alive, and you couldn't imagine how beautiful the inside of that building is, as the community and different groups have all invested dollars and lots of sweat and blood and tears to be able to bring it back again. And when you drive down Apache now, you see the Big 10. You see, Black history is not all ancient history. Black history in America and Black history in my State is still going on right now because people like Lonnie Williams, who set a path for my State and my community decades ago—that baton is being picked up by folks like Dr. Lester Shaw, and they are doing remarkable work to help thousands of students.

So, for me, I was honored to sit and listen to live music in the Big 10. And if anybody is traveling through Tulsa, I would encourage you to swing down Apache and hear live music in the same place where B.B. King and James Brown and Ray Charles, Tina Turner,

Count Basie, and Fats Domino sang, the place intended to be able to hear history come alive.

By the way, Big 10 is not called the Big 10 anymore. Now they call it the Historic Big 10.

We are living out history right now, and I am grateful for the Williams family and the legacy they have left and what Dr. Shaw has picked up. God bless them in the work, and we are grateful for what they have done in the past.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

REMEMBERING OSWALDO PAYA

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to honor the memory of Oswaldo Paya, who would have celebrated his 71st birthday this week. His memory and his story have been an inspiration to dissidents across the world, and I would like to briefly retell it here today.

Oswaldo Paya was a dissident and a democracy activist in Cuba with unrelenting passion and dedication. He was someone who stood up against the Castro regime at very direct risk to his own life. He had incredible courage. He spoke up for human rights. He spoke up for free speech. He spoke up for democracy.

Eleven years ago, Oswaldo Paya was murdered. On July 22, 2012, Paya left his house with three other people to go visit friends. From the start of their journey, their car was followed. On the way, the Cuban police drove Paya's car off the road and killed him. The crash is widely believed to have been orchestrated by the Castro regime.

Paya had long been a thorn in the side of the Castros, even from a young age. He was the only person at his school who had refused to join the Communist Youth. As a teenager, he publicly opposed the communist crackdown on protesters in Czechoslovakia who were fighting for freedom, and he was punished with 3 years in prison.

Paya went on to found the Varela Project, which sought a referendum on Cuba's communist system. Their demands were simple: democratic government, religious liberty, freedom of expression, and the freedom to start businesses. Paya managed to get 11,000 signatures to petition the government to hold a referendum, and eventually 20,000 people supported the referendum. Twenty thousand people risked their lives by standing with Oswaldo Paya for freedom. But the Cuban Government refused to hold a referendum.

Paya's fight for freedom made him a target repeatedly of the Communist Party in Cuba. They harassed him, tried to intimidate him, and arrested him numerous times. And in 2012, they killed him.

Paya's friend and the driver of the car said that when he awoke after the crash, he was confronted at the hospital by a government operative, and the hospital was flooded with uni-

formed military personnel. Under extreme duress, drugged, and threatened with death by government officials, he signed a confession that directly contradicted what he knew to be true—that the communist regime had just murdered Oswaldo Paya.

I have met multiple times with Oswaldo Paya's daughter, Rosa Maria, who is an incredible, courageous, powerful leader in her own right, and we have discussed ways we can continue her father's fight for justice in Cuba. One of the things I have done is I have filed legislation to rename the street in front of the Cuban Embassy in Washington, DC, "Oswaldo Paya Way." Renaming the street in front of the Cuban Embassy would send a powerful message to the communist regime.

During the Cold War, President Reagan followed this very same strategy. He renamed the street in front of the Soviet Embassy "Sakharov Plaza" after the famed human rights dissident in the Soviet Union. It was part of a broader strategy to call out the evil regime. My strategy is the same here.

Some people may think a street name is not that big a deal, but think about it for a moment. If you change the street name, it means anyone who wants to write to the Cuban Embassy will have to write Oswaldo Paya's name. If you need to go there, you will have to look up the address and see the same. Tyranny exists in darkness. Oppressive regimes are terrified by dissidents. Members of the Cuban Government who deal with the Embassy will have to acknowledge that Paya existed and that this hero who was wrongfully murdered was real. They will have to say his name. There is power in saying his name.

I want to tell you another story that illustrates just how powerful this renaming strategy can be. Several years ago, I introduced legislation to rename the street in front of the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, "Liu Xiaobo Plaza." Liu Xiaobo was a Noble Peace laureate and democracy activist in China who was wrongfully imprisoned there. My bill ended up passing the U.S. Senate 100 to nothing. Every Senator, Republican and Democrat, agreed with that bill. Sadly, even though it was a Democrat Senate at the time, the Republican House failed to take up the bill, so it didn't pass into law.

But here is an epilogue to that story. At the beginning of the Trump administration in 2017, I was having breakfast with Rex Tillerson, the new Secretary of State. We were at Foggy Bottom at the State Department. We were talking about China at one point, and he said he had just had a meeting with his counterpart, the Foreign Minister of China. He said the Foreign Minister came out and said the Chinese Communist Government has three top priorities in foreign policy, and Rex kind of shook his head.

He said: Ted, it is the damndest thing. One of their top three priorities is to prevent your bill to rename the